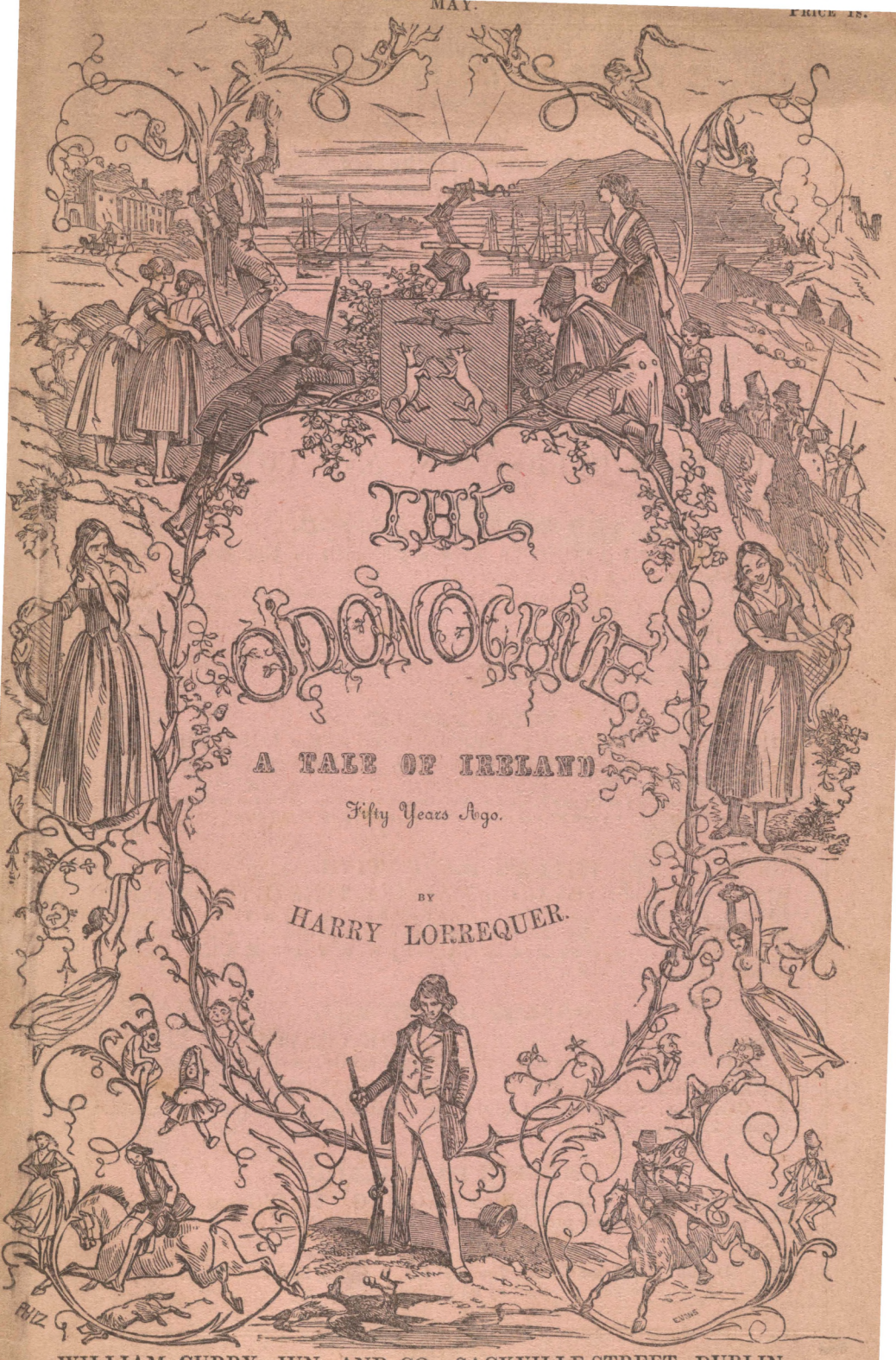

# THE O'DONOGHUE

## A TALE OF IRELAND

Fifty Years Ago.

BY

HARRY LORREQUER.

WILLIAM CURRY, JUN. AND CO., SACKVILLE-STREET, DUBLIN.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### "THE FOREIGN LETTER."

THE arrival of a post-letter at the O'Donoghue house was an occurrence of sufficient rarity to create some excitement in the household; and many a surmise, as to what new misfortune hung over the family, was hazarded between Mrs. Branagan and Kerry O'Leary, as the latter poised and balanced the epistle in his hand, as though its weight and form might assist him in his divination.

After having conned over all the different legal processes which he deemed might be conveyed in such a shape, and conjured up in his imagination a whole army of sheriffs, sub-sheriffs, bailiffs, and drivers, of which the ominous letter should prove the forerunner, he heaved a heavy sigh at the gloomy future his forebodings had created, and slowly ascended towards his master's bed-room.

"How is Herbert?" said the O'Donoghue, as he heard the footsteps beside his bed, for he had been dreaming of the boy a few minutes previous. "Who is that? Ah! Kerry. Well, how is he to-day?"

"Troth there's no great change to spake of," said Kerry, who, not having made any inquiry himself, and never expecting to have been questioned on the subject, preferred this safe line of reply, as he deemed it, to a confession of his ignorance.

"Did he sleep well, Kerry?"

"Oh! for the matter of the sleep we won't boast of it. But here's a letter for your honour, come by the post."

"Leave it on the bed, and tell me about the boy."

"Faix there's nothing particular, then, to tell yer honour—sometimes he'd be one way, sometimes another—and more times the same way again. That's the way he'd be all the night through."

The O'Donoghue pondered for a second or two, endeavouring to frame some distinct notion from these scanty materials, and then said—

"Send Master Mark to me." At the same instant he drew aside the curtain, and broke the seal of the letter. The first few lines, however, seemed to satisfy his curiosity, although the epistle was written in a close hand, and extended over three sides of the paper; and he threw

it carelessly on the bed, and lay down again once more. During all this time, however, Kerry managed to remain in the room, and, while affecting to arrange clothes and furniture, keenly scrutinized the features of his master. It was of no use, however. The old man's looks were as apathetic as usual, and he seemed already to have forgotten the missive Kerry had endowed with so many terrors and misfortunes.

"Herbert has passed a favourable night," said Mark, entering a few moments after. "The fever seems to have left him, and, except for debility, I suppose there is little to ail him. What!—a letter! Who is this from?"

"From Kate," said the old man listlessly. "I got as far as 'My dear uncle;' the remainder must await a better light, and, mayhap, sharper eyesight too—for the girl has picked up this new mode of scribbling, which is almost unintelligible to me."

As the O'Donoghue was speaking, the young man had approached the window, and was busily perusing the letter. As he read, his face changed colour more than once. Breaking off, he said—

"You don't know, then, what news we have here? More embarrassment—ay, by Jove, and a heavier one than even it seems at first sight. The French armies, it appears, are successful all over the Low Countries, and city after city falling into their possession; and so, the convents are breaking up, and the Sacré Cœur, where Kate is, has set free its inmates, who are returning to their friends. She comes here."

"What!—here?" said the O'Donoghue, with some evidence of doubt at intelligence so strange and unexpected. "Why, Mark, my boy, that's impossible—the house is a ruin; we haven't a room; we have no servants, and have nothing like accommodation for the girl."

"Listen to this, then," said Mark, as he read from the letter:—'You may then conceive, my dear old papa—for I must call you the old name again, now that we are to meet—how happy I am to visit Carrig-na-curra once more. I persuade myself I remember the old beech wood in the glen, and the steep path beside the waterfall, and the wooden railings to guard against the precipice. Am I not right? And there's an ash tree over the pool, lower down. Cousin Mark climbed it to pluck the berries for me, and fell in, too. There's memory for you!"

"She'll be puzzled to find the wood now," said the O'Donoghue, with a sad attempt at a smile. "Go on, Mark."

"It's all the same kind of thing: she speaks of Molly Cooney's cabin, and the red boat-house, and fifty things that are gone many a

day ago. Strange enough, she remembers what I myself have long since forgotten. 'How I long for my own little blue bed-room, that looked out on Keim-an-eigh!'——"

"There, Mark—don't read any more, my lad. Poor dear Kate!—what would she think of the place now?"

"The thing is impossible," said Mark, sternly; "the girl has got a hundred fancies and tastes, unsuited to our rude life; her French habits would ill agree with our barbarism. You must write to your cousin—that old Mrs. Bedingfield—if that's her name. She must take her for the present, at least; she offered it once before."

"Yes," said the old man, with an energy he had not used till now, "she did, and I refused. My poor brother detested that woman, and would never, had he lived, have entrusted his daughter to her care. If she likes it, the girl shall make this her home. My poor Harry's child shall not ask twice for a shelter, while I have one to offer her."

"Have you thought, sir, how long you may be able to extend the hospitality you speak of? Is this house now your own, that you can make a proffer of it to any one?—and if it were, is it here, within these damp, discoloured walls, with ruin without and within, that you'd desire a guest—and such a guest?"

"What do you mean, boy?"

"I mean what I say. The girl educated in the midst of luxury, pampered and flattered—we heard that from the Abbé—what a favourite she was there, and how naturally she assumed airs of command and superiority over the girls of her own age—truly, if penance were the object, the notion is not a bad one."

"I say it again—this is her home. I grieve it should be so rude a one—but, I'll never refuse to let her share it."

"Nor would I," muttered Mark, gloomily, "if it suited either her habits, or her tastes. Let her come, however; a week's experience will do more to undeceive her than if we wrote letters for a twelvemonth."

"You must write to her, Mark; you must tell her, that matters have not gone so well with us latterly—that she'll see many changes here; but mind, you say how happy we are to receive her."

"She can have her choice of blue bed-rooms, too—shall I say that?" said Mark, almost savagely. "The damp has given them the proper tinge for her fancy; and as to the view she speaks of, assuredly there is nothing to baulk it: the window has fallen out many a day ago, that looked on Keim-an-eigh."

"How can you torture me this way, boy?" said the old man, with a look of imploring, to which his white hairs and aged features gave a most painful expression. But Mark turned away, and made no answer.

"My uncle," said he, after a pause, "must answer this epistle. Letter-writing is no burthen to him. In fact, I believe, he rather likes it; so here goes to do him a favour. It is seldom the occasion presents itself."

It was not often that Mark O'Donoghue paid a visit to Sir Archibald in his chamber; and the old man received him as he entered with all the show of courtesy he would have extended to a stranger—a piece of attention which was very far, indeed, from relieving Mark of any portion of his former embarrassment.

"I have brought you a letter, sir," said he, almost ere he took his seat—"a letter which my father would thank you to reply to. It is from my cousin Kate, who is about to return to Ireland, and take up her abode here."

"Ye dinna mean she's coming here, to Carrig-na-curra?"

"It is even so! though I don't wonder at your finding it hard of belief."

"It's mair than that—it's far mair—it's downright incredible."

"I thought so, too; but my father cannot agree with me. He will not believe that this old barrack is not a baronial castle; and persists in falling back on what is past, rather than look on the present, not to speak of the future."

"But she canna live here, Mark," said Sir Archy, his mind ever dwelling on the great question at issue. "There's no' a spot in the whole house she could inhabit. I ken something of these French damsels, and their ways; and the strangers that go there for education are a' worse than the natives. I mind the time I was in Paris with his Royal ——" Sir Archy coughed, and reddened up, and let fall his snuff-box, spilling all the contents on the floor.

"Gude save us, here's a calamity! It was real macabaw, and cost twa shillings an ounce. I maun even see if I canna scrape it up wi' a piece of paper;" and so, he set himself diligently to glean up the scattered dust, muttering, all the time, maledictions on his bad luck.

Mark never moved nor spoke the entire time; but sat with the open letter in his hand, patiently awaiting the resumption of the discussion.

"Weel, weel," exclaimed Sir Archy, as he resumed his seat once more; "let us see the epistle, and perhaps we may find some clue to put her off."

"My father insists on her coming," said Mark, sternly.

"So he may, lad," replied Sir Archy; "but she may ha'e her ain reasons for declining—dinna ye see that? This place is a ruin. Wha's to say it is no' undergoing a repair—that the roof is off, and will not be on for sax months to come. The country, too, is in a vara disturbed state. Folks are talking in a suspicious way."

Mark thought of the midnight march he had witnessed; but said nothing.

"There's a fever, besides, in the house, and wha can tell the next to tak' it. The Lord be mercifu' to us!" added he gravely, as if the latter thought approached somewhat too close on a temptation of Providence.

"If she's like what I remember her as a child," replied Mark, "your plan would be a bad one for its object. Tell her the place is a ruin, and she'd give the world to see it for bare curiosity; say, there was a likelihood of a rebellion, and she would risk her life to be near it; and as for a fever, we never were able to keep her out of the cabins when there was sickness going. Faith, I believe it was the danger, and not the benevolence, of the act charmed her."

"You are no' far wrang. I mind her weel—she was a saucy cutty; and I canna forget the morning she gave me a bunch o' thistles on my birth day, and ca'ed it a 'Scotch bouquey.'"

"You had better read the letter in any case," said Mark, as he presented the epistle. Sir Archy took it, and perused it from end to end without a word; then laying it open on his knee, he said—

"The lassie's heart is no' far wrang, Mark, depend upon it. Few call up the simple memories o' childish days, if they have no' retained some of the guileless spirit that animated them. I wad like to see her mysel'," said he, after a pause. "But what have we here in the postscript?"—and he read aloud the following lines:—

"I have too good a recollection of a Carrig-na-curra household, to make any apology for adding one to the number below stairs, in the person of my maid, Mademoiselle Hortense, from whose surprise and astonishment at our Irish mountains I anticipate a rich treat. She is a true Parisian, who cannot believe in any thing outside the Boulevards. What will she think of Mrs. Branagan and Kerry O'Leary?—and what will they think of her?"

"Lord save us, Mark, this is an awfu' business; a French waiting woman here! Why, she might as weel bring a Bengal tiger! I protest I'd rather see the one than the other."

"She'll not stay long; make your mind easy about her; nor will Kate either, if she need such an attendant."

"True enough, Mark, we maun let the malady cure itsel'; and so, I suppose, the lassie must even see the nakedness o' the land wi' her ain eyes, though I'd just as soon we could 'put the cover on the parritch,' as the laird said, 'and make the fules think it brose.' It's no ower pleasant to expose one's poverty."

"Then you'll write the letter," said Mark, rising, "and we must do what we can, in the way of preparation. The time is short enough too, for that letter was written almost a month ago—she might arrive this very week."

As he spoke, the shuffling sounds of feet were heard in the corridor outside; the young man sprung to the door, and looked out, and just caught sight of Kerry O'Leary, with a pair of boots under his arm, descending the stairs.

"That fellow, Kerry—listening as usual," said Mark. "I heard him at my door about a fortnight since, when I was talking to Herbert, and I sent a bullet through the pannel—I thought it might cure him."

"I wonder it did na kill him!" exclaimed M'Nab in horror.

"No, no, my hand is too steady for that. I aimed at least two inches above his head—it might have grazed his hair."

"By my word, I'll no' play the eaves-dropper wi' you, Mark; or, at least, I'd like to draw the charge o' your pistols first."

"She can have my room," said Mark, not heeding the speech. "I'll take that old tower they call the guard-room; I fancy I shall not be dispossessed for a considerable time,"—and the youth left the chamber to look after the arrangements he spoke of.

"'Tis what I tould you," said Kerry, as he drew his stool beside the kitchen fire; "I was right enough, she's coming back again to live here—I was listening at the door, and heerd it all."

"And she's laving the blessed nunnery!" exclaimed Mrs. Branagan, with a holy horror in her countenance—"desarting the elegant place, with the priests, and monks, and friars, to come here again, in the middle of every wickedness and divilment—ochone! ochone!"

"What wickedness and what divilment are you spaking about?" said Kerry, indignantly, at the aspersion thus cast on the habits of the house.

Mrs. Branagan actually started at the bare idea of a contradiction, and turned on him a look of fiery wrath, as she said:—

"Be my conscience you're bould to talk that way to me!—What wickedness! Isn't horse-racing, card-playing, raffling, wickedness? Isn't drinking and swearin' wickedness? Isn't it wickedness to kill three sheep a week, and a cow a fortnight, to feed a set of dirty spalpeens of grooms and stable chaps? Isn't it wickedness—botheration to you—

but I wouldn't be losing my time talking to you! When was one of ye at his duties? Answer me that. How much did one of ye pay at Ayster or Christmas, these ten years? Signs on it, Father Luke hasn't a word for ye when he comes here—he trates ye with contimpt."

Kerry was abashed and terrified. He little knew when he pulled up the sluice-gate, the torrent that would flow down; and now, would have made any "amende," to establish a truce again; but Mrs. Branagan was a woman, and, having seen the subjugation of her adversary, her last thought was mercy.

"Wickedness, indeed! It's fifty years out of purgatory, sorra less, to live ten years here, and see what goes on."

"Divil a lie in it," chimed in Kerry, meekly; "there's no denying a word you say."

"I'd like to see who'd dare deny it—and, sign's on it, there's a curse on the place—nothing thrives in it."

"Faix, then, ye mustn't say that, any how," said Kerry, insinuatingly: "*you* have no rayson to spake again it. 'Twas Tuesday week last I heerd Father Luke say—it was to myself he said it—'How is Mrs. Branagan, Kerry?' says he. 'She's well and hearty your reverence,' says I. 'I'll tell you what she is, Kerry,' says he, 'she's looking just as I knew her five-and-thirty years ago; and a comelier, dacenter woman wasn't in the three baronies. I remember well,' says he, 'I seen her at the fair of Killarney, and she had a cap with red ribbons.' Hadn't ye a cap with red ribbons in it?"

A nod was the response.

"True for him, ye see he didn't forget it; and says he, 'She took the shine out of the fair; she could give seven pounds, and half a distance, to ere a girl there, and beat her after by a neck.'"

"What's that ye're saying?" said Mrs. Branagan, who didn't comprehend the figurative language of the turf, particularly when coming from Father Luke's lips.

"I'm saying ye were the purtiest woman that walked the fair-green," said Kerry, correcting his phraseology.

"Father Luke was a smart little man then himself, and had a nate leg and foot."

"Killarney was a fine place I'm tould," said Kerry, with a dexterous shift to change the topic. "I wasn't often there myself, but I heerd it was the iligant fair entirely."

"So it was," said Mrs. Branagan; "there never was the kind of sport and divarsion wasn't there. It begun on a Monday and went through the week; and short enough the time was. There was dancing,

and fighting, and singing, and 'stations,' up to Aghadoe and down again on the bare knees, and a pilgrimage to the holy well—three times round that, maybe after a jig two hours long; and there was a dwarf that tould fortunes, and a friar that sould gospels agin fever, and fallin' sickness, and ballad-singers, and play-actors. Musha, there never was the like of it;" and in this strain did she pour forth a flood of impassioned eloquence on the recollection of those carnal pleasures and enjoyments which, but a few minutes before, she had condemned so rigidly in others, nor was it till at the very close of her speech that she suddenly perceived how she had wandered from her text; then with a heavy groan she muttered—"Ayeh! we're sinful craytures, the best of us."

Kerry responded to the sentiment with a fac-simile sigh, and the peace was ratified.

"You wouldn't believe now what Miss Kate is bringing over with her—faix, you wouldn't believe it."

"Maybe a monkey," said Mrs. Branagan, who had a vague notion that France lay somewhere within the tropics.

"Worse nor that."

"Is it a bear?" asked she again.

"No, but a French maid, to dress her hair, and powder her, and put patches on her face."

"Whisht, I tell you," cried Mrs. Branagan, "and don't be talking that way. Miss Kate was never the one to turn to the likes of them things."

"'Tis truth I'm telling ye then; I heerd it all between the master and Master Mark, and afterwards with ould Sir Archy, and the three of them is in a raal fright about the maid; they say she'll be the divil for impidence."

"Will she then!" said Mrs. Branagan, with an eye glistening in anticipation of battle.

"The never a day's peace or ease we're to have again, when she's here—'tis what the master says. 'I pity poor Mrs. Branagan,' says he; 'she's a quiet crayture that wont take her own part, and——'"

"Won't I? Be my conscience, we'll soon see that."

"Them's his words—'and if Kerry and she don't lay their heads together to make the place too hot for her, she'll bully the pair of them.'"

"Lave it to myself—lave it to me alone, Kerry O'Leary."

"I was thinking that same, ma'am," said Kerry, with a droll leer as he spoke; "I'd take the odds on you any day, and never ask the name of the other horse."

"I'll lay the mark of my fingers on her av she says 'pays,'" said Mrs. Branagan, with an energy that looked like truth.

Meanwhile, Kerry, perceiving that her temper was up, spared nothing to aggravate her passion, retailing every possible and impossible affront the new visitor might pass off on her, and expressing the master's sorrows at the calamities awaiting her.

"If she isn't frightened out of the country at once, there's no help for it," said he at last. "I have a notion myself, but sure maybe it's a bad one."

"What is it then?—spake it out free."

"'Tis just to wait for the chaise—she'll come in a chaise, it's likely."

But what was Kerry's plan, neither Mrs. Branagan nor the reader are destined to hear, for at that moment a loud summons at the hall door—a very unusual sound—announced the arrival of a stranger; Kerry, therefore, had barely time for a hasty toilet with a pocket-comb, before a small fragment of looking-glass he carried in his pocket, as he hastened to receive the visitor.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### "KATE O'DONOGHUE."

BEFORE Kerry O'Leary had reached the hall, the object around whose coming all his schemes revolved, was already in her uncle's arms.

"My dear, dear Kate!" said the old man, as he embraced her again and again, while she, overcome by a world of conflicting emotions, concealed her face upon his shoulder.

"This is Mark, my dearest girl—cousin Mark."

The girl looked up, and fixed her large full eyes upon the countenance of the young man, as, in an attitude of bashful hesitation, he stood, uncertain how far the friendship of former days warranted his advances. She, too, seemed equally confused; and when she held out her hand, and he took it half coldly, the meeting augured but poorly for warmth of heart on either side.

"And Herbert—where is he?" cried she eagerly, hoping to cover the chilling reception by the inquiry—"and my uncle Archy——"

"Is here to answer for himsel'," said M'Nab, quietly, as he came rapidly forward and kissed her on either cheek; and, with an arm leaning on each of the old men, she walked forward to the drawing-room.

"And are you alone, my dear child—have you come alone?" said the O'Donoghue.

"Even so, papa;—my attached and faithful Hortense left me at Bristol. Sea sickness became stronger than affection. She had a dream, besides, that she was lost, devoured, or carried off by a merman—I forget what. And the end was, she refused to go further, and did her best to persuade me to the same opinion. She didn't remember that I had sent on my effects, and that my heart was here already."

"My own dearest child!" said O'Donoghue, as he pressed her hand fervently between his own.

"But how have ye journeyed by yoursel'?" said Sir Archy, as he gazed on the slight and delicate figure before him.

"Wonderfully well, uncle. During the voyage every one was most polite and attentive to me. There was a handsome young Guardsman who would have been more, had he not been gentleman enough to know that I was a lady. And, once at Cork, I met, the very moment of landing, with a kind old friend, Father Luke, who took care of me hither. He only parted with me at the gate, not wishing to interfere, as he said, with our first greetings. But I don't see Herbert—where is he?"

"Poor Herbert has been dangerously ill, my dear," said the father, "I scarcely think it safe for him to see you."

"No, no," interposed Sir Archy, feelingly. "If the sight of her can stir the seared heart of an auld carle like mysel', it wad na be the surest way to calm the frenzied blood of a youth."

Perhaps Sir Archy was not far wrong. Kate O'Donoghue was, indeed, a girl of no common attraction. Her figure, rather below than above the middle size, was yet so perfectly moulded, that for very symmetry and grace it seemed as if such should have been the standard of womanly beauty, while her countenance had a character of loveliness, even more striking than beautiful; her eyes were large, full, and of a liquid blue that resembled black; her hair, a rich brown, through which a golden tinge was seen to run, almost the colour of an autumn sun-set, giving a brilliancy to her complexion which, in its transparent beauty, needed no such aid; but her mouth was the feature whose

expression, more than any other, possessed a peculiar charm. In speaking, the rounded lips moved with a graceful undulation, more expressive than mere sound, while, as she listened, the slightest tremble of the lip harmonizing with the brilliant glance of her eyes, gave a character of rapid intelligence to her face, well befitting the vivid temper of her nature. She looked her very self—a noble-hearted, high-spirited girl, without a thought save for what was honourable and lofty; one who accepted no compromise with a doubtful line of policy, but eagerly grasped at the right, and stood firmly by the consequence. Although educated within the walls of a convent, she had mixed, her extreme youth considered, much in the world of the city she lived in, and was thus as accomplished in all the "usage," and conventional habits of society, as she was cultivated in those gifts and graces which give it all its ornament. To a mere passing observer there might seem somewhat of coquetry in her manner; but very little observation would show, that such unerring gracefulness cannot be the result of mere practice, and that, innate character had assumed that garb which best suited it, and not one to be merely worn for a season. Her accent, too, when she spoke English, had enough of foreign intonation about it to lay the ground for a charge of affectation; but he should have been a sturdy critic who could have persisted in the accusation. The fear was rather, that one leaned to the very fault of pronunciation as an excellence, so much of piquancy did it occasionally lend to expressions, which, from other lips, had seemed tame and common-place. To any one who has seen the graceful coquetry of French manner engrafted on the more meaning eloquence of Irish beauty, my effort at a portrait will appear a very meagre and barren outline; and I feel how poorly I have endeavoured to convey any idea of one, whose Spanish origin had left a legacy of gracefulness and elegance, to be warmed into life by the fervid character of the Celt, and tempered again by the consummate attraction of French manner.

The ease and kindliness of spirit with which she sat between the two old men, listening in turn to each, or answering with graceful alacrity the questions they proffered—the playful delicacy with which she evaded the allusions they made from time to time to the disappointment the ruined house must have occasioned her—and the laughing gaiety with which she spoke of the new life about to open before her, were actually contagious. They already forgot the fears her anticipated coming had inspired; and gazed on her with the warm affection that should wait on a welcome. Oh! what a gift is beauty, and how powerful its influence, when strengthened by the rich eloquence of a spotless nature, beaming

from beneath long-lashed lids, when two men like these, seared and hardened by the world's ills—broken on the wheel of fortune—should feel a glow of long-forgotten gladness in their chilled hearts as they looked upon her? None could have guessed, however, what an effort that seeming light-heartedness cost her. Poor girl! Scarcely was she alone, and had closed the door of her room behind her, when she fell upon the bed in a torrent of tears, and sobbed as if her heart was breaking. All that Father Luke had said as they came along—and the kind old man had done his utmost to break the shock of the altered state of her uncle's fortunes—was far from preparing her for the cold reality she witnessed. It was not the ruined walls, the treeless mountain, the desolate and dreary look of all around, that smote upon her heart; sad as these signs were, her grief had a higher source: it was the sight of that old man she called father, tottering feebly to the grave, surrounded by images of poverty and misfortune. It was the aspect of Mark, the cousin, she had pictured to her mind as an accomplished gentleman in look and demeanour; the descendant of a house more than noble—the heir of a vast property; and now she saw him, scarce in gesture and manner above the peasant—in dress, as slovenly and uncared for. She was prepared for a life of monotonous retirement and isolation. She was ready to face the long winter of dreary solitude—but not in such company as this. That she never calculated on. Her worst anticipations had never conjured up more than an unchequered existence, with little to vary or relieve it; and now, she foresaw a life to be passed amid the miserable straits and shifts of poverty, with all its petty incidents and lowering accidents, to lessen her esteem for those she wished to look up to and love. And this was Carrig-na-curra, the proud castle she had so often boasted of to her school companions, the baronial seat she had loved to exalt above the antique chateaux of France and Flanders; and these the haughty relatives, whose pride she mentioned as disdaining the alliance of the Saxon, and spurning all admixture of blood with a race less noble than their own. The very chamber she sat in, how did it contradict her own animated descriptions of its once comforts and luxuries! Alas! it seemed to be like duplicity and falsehood, that she had so spoken of these things. More than once she asked herself—"Were they always thus?" Poor child! she knew not that poverty can bring sickness, and sorrow, and premature old age. It can devastate the fields, and desolate the affections, and make cold both heart and home together!

If want stopped short at privation, men need not to tremble at its approach. It is in the debasing and degrading influence of poverty its

real terror lies. It is in the plastic facility with which the poor man shifts to meet the coming evil, that the high principle of rectitude is sacrificed, and the unflinching course of honour deviated from. When the proud three decker, in all the majesty of her might, may sail along her course unaltered, the humble craft, in the same sea, must tack, and beat, and watch for every casualty of the gale to gain her port in safety. These are the trials of the poor, but proud man. It is not the want of liveried lacqueys, of plate, of equipage, and all the glittering emblems of wealth, that smite his heart, and break his spirit. It is the petty subterfuge he is reduced to, that galls him—it is the sense of struggle between his circumstances and his conscience—between what he does, and what he feels.

It is true, Kate knew not these things, but yet she had before her the results of them too palpably to be mistaken. Sir Archibald was the only one on whom reverse of fortune had not brought carelessness and coarseness of manner. He seemed, both in dress and demeanour, little changed from what she remembered him years before; nor had time, apparently, fallen on him with heavier impress in other respects. What was Herbert like? was the question ever rising to her mind, but with little hope that the answer would prove satisfactory.

While Kate O'Donoghue was thus pondering over the characters of those with whom she was now to live, they, on the other hand, were exerting themselves to the utmost to restore some semblance of its ancient comfort to the long-neglected dwelling. A blazing fire of bog deal was lighted in the old hall, whose mellow glare glanced along the dark oak wainscot, and threw a rich glow along the corridor itself, to the very door of the tower. In the great chamber, where they sat, many articles of furniture, long disused and half forgotten, were now collected, giving, even by their number, a look of increased comfort to the roomy apartment. Nor were such articles of ornament as they possessed forgotten. The few pictures which had escaped the wreck of damp and time were placed upon the walls, and a small miniature of Kate, as a child—a poor performance enough—was hung up over the chimney, as it were to honour her, whose presence these humble preparations were made to celebrate. Sir Archy, too, as eager in these arrangements as Mark himself, had brought several books and illustrated volumes from his chamber to scatter upon the tables; while, as if for a shrine for the deity of the place, a little table of most elaborate marquetrie, and a richly-carved chair beside the fire, designated the place Kate was to occupy as her own, and to mark which, he had culled the very gems of his collection.

It is scarcely possible to conceive, how completely even a few trifling objects like these can change the "morale" of a chamber—how that, which before seemed cumbrous, sad, and dispiriting, becomes at once lightsome and pleasant-looking. But so it is: the things which speak of human thought and feeling appeal to a very different sense from those which merely minister to material comfort; and we accept the presence of a single book, a print, or drawing, as an evidence that mental aliment has not been forgotten.

If the changes here spoken of gave a very different air and seeming to the old tower, Kate's own presence there completed the magic of the transformation. Dressed in black silk, and wearing a profusion of lace of the same colour—for her costume had been adapted to a very different sphere—she took her place in the family circle, diffusing around her a look of refinement and elegance, and making of that sombre chamber a spacious "salon." Her guitar, her embroidery, her old-fashioned writing-desk, inlaid with silver, caught the eye as it wandered about the room, and told of womanly graces and accomplishments, so foreign to the rude emblems of the chase and the field, henceforth to be banished to the old entrance hall.

The O'Donoghue himself felt the influence of the young girl's presence, and evidenced, in his altered dress and demeanour, the respect he desired to show; while Mark took from his scanty wardrobe the only garment he possessed above the rank of a shooting jacket, and entered the room with a half-bashful, half-sullen air, as though angry and ashamed with himself for even so much compliance with the world's usages.

Although Kate was quick-sighted enough to see that these changes were caused on her account, her native tact prevented her from showing that knowledge, and made her receive their attentions with that happy blending of courtesy and familiarity, so fascinating from a young and pretty woman. The dinner—and it was a "chef-d'œuvre" on the part of Mrs. Branagan—passed off most pleasantly. The fear her coming had excited now gave way to the delight her presence conferred. They felt as if they had done her an injustice in their judgment, and hastened to make every "amende" for their unfair opinion. Never, for years long, had the O'Donoghue been so happy. The cold and cheerless chamber was once more warmed into a home. The fire beside which he had so often brooded in sadness, was now the pleasant hearth, surrounded by cheery faces. Memories of the past, soothing through all their sorrow, flowed in upon his mind, as he sat and gazed at her in tranquil ecstacy. Sir Archibald, too, felt a return to his former self,

in the tone of good breeding her presence diffused, and evinced, by the attentive politeness of his manner, how happy he was to recur once more to the observances which he remembered with so much affection, associated, as they were, with the brightest period of his life.

As for Mark, although less an actor than the others in the scene, the effect upon him was not less striking. All his assumed apathy gave way as he listened to her descriptions of foreign society, and the habits of those she had lived amongst. The ringing melody of her voice, the brilliant sparkle of her dark eyes, the graceful elegance of gesture—the French woman's prerogative—threw over him their charm, a fascination never experienced before; and although a dark dread would now and then steal across his mind, How was a creature, beautiful and gifted like this, to lead the life of dreariness and gloom their days were passed in? —the tender feeling of affection she shewed his father, the fondness with which she dwelt on every little incident of her childhood—every little detail of the mountain scenery—showed a spirit which well might harmonise with a home, even humble as theirs, and pleasures as uncostly and as simple. "Oh! if she grow not weary of us!" was the heart-uttered sentence each moment as he listened; and, in the very anxiety of the doubt, the ecstacy of enjoyment was heightened. To purchase this boon, there was nothing he would not dare. To think that as he trod the glens, or followed the wild deer along some cragged and broken mountain gorge, a home like this ever awaited him, was a picture of happiness too bright and dazzling to look upon.

"Now, then, 'ma belle,'" said Sir Archibald, as he rose from his seat, and, with an air of gallantry that might have done credit to Versailles of old, threw the ribbon of her guitar over her neck—"now for your promise—that little romance ye spoke of."

"Willingly, dear uncle," replied she, striking the chords as a kind of prelude. "Shall I sing you one of our convent hymns?—or will you have the romance?"

"It is no' fair to tempt one in a choice," said M'Nab, slyly; "but sin' ye say so, I must hear baith before I decide."

"Your own favourite, the first," said she, smiling, and began the little chanson of the "Garde Ecossaise," the song of the exiled nobles in the service of France, so dear to every Scotchman's heart.

While the melody described the gathering of the clans in the mountains, to take leave of their departing kinsmen, the measured tramp of the music, and the wild ringing of the pibroch, the old chieftain's face lit up, and his eye glared with the fierce fire of native pride; but when the moment of leave-taking arrived, and the heart-rending cry of "Fare-

well!" broke from his deserted, the eye became glazed and filmy, and with a hand tremulous from emotion, he stopped the singer.

"Na, na, Kate; I canna bear that, the noo. Ye ha'e smote the rock too suddenly, lassie;" and the tears rolled heavily down his seared cheeks.

"You must let me finish uncle," said she, disengaging her hand; and at the instant, sweeping the chord with a bold and vigorous finger, she broke into a splendid and chivalrous description of the Scottish valour in the service of France, every line swelling with their proud achievements, as foremost they marched to battle. To this succeeded the crash and turmoil of the fray, the ringing cheers of the plaided warriors mingling with the war-cries of the Gaul, till, in a burst of triumph and victory, the song concluded. Then, the old man sprang from his chair, and threw his arms around her in a transport, as he cried—

"It's a mercifu' thing, lassie, ye did na' live fifty years ago: by my saul, there's nae saying how many a brave fellow the like o' that had laid low!"

"If that be one of the hymns you spoke of, Kate," said the O'Donoghue, smiling, "I fancy Mark would have no objection to be a nun; but where is he?—he has left the room."

"I hope there was nothing in my song he disliked?" asked she, timidly; but before there was time for an answer the door opened, and Mark appeared with Herbert in his arms.

"There!" said he, laying him gently on the sofa; "if cousin Kate will only sing that once more, I'll answer for it, it will save you a fortnight in your recovery."

Kate knelt down beside the sick boy, and kissed him tenderly; while he, poor fellow, scarce daring to believe in the reality of all before him, played with the long tangles of her silky hair, and gazed on her in silence.

"We maun be cautious, Mark," whispered M'Nab, carefully; but Mark had no ears nor eyes save for her who now sat beside his brother, and in a low soft voice breathed her affectionate greetings to him.

In this way passed the first evening of her coming—a night whose fascination dwelt deep in every heart, and made each dreamer blest.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### "A HASTY PLEDGE."

WHILE these things were happening within the ruined castle of the O'Donoghue, a guest, equally unexpected as theirs, had arrived at "the Lodge." Frederick Travers, delayed in Bristol by contrary winds, had come over in the same packet with Kate; but without being able either to learn her name, or whither she was going. His unlooked for appearance at "the Lodge," was a most welcome surprise both to Sir Marmaduke and Sybella; and as he did not desire to avow the real object of his coming, it was regarded by them as the most signal proof of affection. They well knew how much London life engrossed him—how completely its peculiar habits and haunts possessed attractions for him—and with what a depreciating estimate he looked down on every part of the globe, save that consecrated to the fashionable follies and amusements of his own set.

He was not, in reality, insensible to other and better influences; his affection for his father and sister was unbounded; he had a bold, manly spirit, unalloyed with any thing mean or sordid; a generous, candid nature, and straightforward earnestness of purpose, that often carried him farther by impulse, than he was followed by his convictions. Still a conventional cant, a tone of disparaging, half-contemptuous indifference to every thing which characterized his associates, had already infected him; and he felt ashamed to confess to those sentiments and opinions, to possess and to act upon which should have been his dearest pride.

"Well, Fred," said Sybella, as they drew around the fire after dinner, in that happy home circle so suggestive of enjoyment, "let us hear what you thought of the scenery. Is not Glenflesk fine?"

"Matlock on a larger scale," said he coolly. "Less timber and more rocks."

"Matlock! dear friend. You might as well compare Keim-an-eigh with Holborn—you are only jesting."

"Compare what? Repeat that droll name, I beg of you."

"Keim-an-eigh. It is a mountain pass quite close to us here."

"Admirably done! Why, Sybella dear, I shall not be surprised to

see you take to the red petticoat and bare-feet soon. You have indoctrinated yourself wonderfully since your arrival."

"I like the people with all my heart, Fred," said she artlessly; "and if I could imitate many of their traits of forbearance and long-suffering patience by following their costume, I promise you I'd don the scarlet."

"Ay, Fred," said Sir Marmaduke, with a sententious gravity, "they don't know these Irish at all at our side of the water. They mistake them totally. They only want teaching, a little example—a little encouragement—that's all: and they are as docile and tractable as possible. I'll show you to-morrow what improvements a few months have effected. I'll bring you over a part of the estate, where there was not a hovel fit for a dog, and you shall see what comfortable dwellings they have. We hear nothing in England but the old songs about popery, and superstition, and all that. Why, my dear Fred, these people don't care a straw for the priest—they'd be any thing I asked them."

"Devilish high principled that, any way," said Fred, drily.

"I didn't exactly mean that; at least in the sense you take it. I was about to say, that such is their confidence, such their gratitude to the landlord, that—that——"

"That in short they'd become Turks, for an abatement in the rent. Well, Sybella dear, is this one of the traits you are so anxious to imitate?"

"Why will you misunderstand, Fred?" said Sybella imploringly. "Cannot you see that gratitude may lead an uninstructed people far beyond the limits of reason—my father is so good to them."

"With all my heart—I have not the slightest objection in life; indeed I'm not sure, if all the estate be like what I passed through this afternoon, if *my* generosity wouldn't go farther, and, instead of reducing the rent, make them an honest present of the fee simple."

"Foolish boy!" said Sir Marmaduke, half angrily. "There are forty thousand acres of reclaimable land——"

"Which might bear crops, Anno Domini 3095."

"There are mines of inexhaustible wealth."

"And would cost such to work them, sir, no doubt. Come, come, father—Hemsworth has passed a life among these people. He knows more than we do, or ever shall.

"I tell you, sir," said Sir Marmaduke, nettled by such a sarcasm on his powers of observation, "I know them perfectly—I can read them like a book. They are a guileless, simple-minded, confiding people—you

may see every thought they have in their countenances. They only need the commonest offices of kindness to attach them; and, as for political or religious leanings, I have questioned them pretty closely, and, without a single exception, have heard nothing but sentiments of loyalty and attachment to the church."

"Well, I only hope you don't mean to prolong your stay here. I'm sure you have done enough for any ordinary call of conscience, and, if you have not, set about it in right earnest—convert the tens into hundreds—make them all as comfortable as possible—and then, in heaven's name, get back again to England. There is no earthly reason why you should pass your time here; and as for Sybella——"

"Don't include me, Fred, in your reasons for departure. I never was so happy in my life."

"There, boy—there's an example for you; and if you need another, here am I, ready to confess the same thing. I don't mean that there are not little dampers and difficulties. There's that fool about the mill-wheel, and that fellow that persists in dragging the river with a net;" and so he muttered on for some minutes beneath his teeth, to the evident enjoyment of Fred, whose quivering lip and laughing eye told how he appreciated the conflicting evidence memory was eliciting.

Thus, for some time, the conversation continued, until Miss Travers retired for the night. Then, Sir Marmaduke drew his chair closer to his son's, and, in an earnest manner, related the whole circumstance of Sybella's escape from the mountain torrent—dwelling with grateful eloquence on the young O'Donoghue's heroism in coming to her rescue. "The youth has narrowly escaped with his life. The doctor, who left this but a few hours ago, said 'he never witnessed a more dangerous case than the symptoms at one time presented.' He is well, however, now—the risk is past—and I want your aid, Fred, to devise some suitable mode of evincing our gratitude.'

"These O'Donoghues are your tenants—are they not?" asked the young man.

"Yes, they are tenants; but on that score we must not say much in their favour. Wylie tells me that they have been at feud with Hemsworth for years past—they neither pay rent, nor will they surrender possession. The whole thing is a difficult matter to understand; first of all, there is a mortgage——"

"There, there, my dear father, don't puzzle my brain and your own with a statement we'll never get to the end of. The point I want to learn is, they are your tenants ——"

"Yes, at least for part of the land they occupy. There is a dispute

about another portion; but I believe Hemsworth has got the Attorney-General's opinion, that their case cannot stand."

"Tush—never mind the Attorney-General. Give up the question at issue; send him, or his father, or whoever it is, the receipt for the rent due, and take care Hemsworth does not molest him in future."

"But you don't see, boy, what we are doing. We hope to obtain the whole of the Ballyvourney property—that is part of our plan; the tenants there are in a state of absolute misery and starvation."

"Then, in God's name, give them plenty to eat; it doesn't signify much, I suppose, whose tenantry they are, when they're hungry."

The old gentleman was scarcely prepared for such an extended basis for his philanthropy, and, for a moment or two, seemed quite dumbfounded by his son's proposition, while Fred continued—"If I understand the matter, it lies thus: you owe a debt of gratitude which you are desirous to acquit—you don't care to pay highly."

"On the contrary, I am quite willing," interposed Sir Marmaduke; "but let the price be one, which shall realize a benefit equivalent to its amount. If I assure these people in the possession of their land, what security have I, that they will not continue, as of old, the same useless, wasteful, spendthrift set they ever were—presenting the worst possible example to the other tenants, and marring the whole force of the lesson I am endeavouring to inculcate?"

"That, I take it, is more *their* affair than *yours*, after all," said Fred; "you are not to confer the boon, and allocate its advantages afterwards—but come, what kind of people are they?"

"Oh! a species of half-gentry, half-farmer set, I believe—proud as they are poor—deeming themselves, as O'Donoghues, at least our equals; but living, as I believe, in every kind of privation."

"Very well; sit down there, and let me have a check on your banker for five hundred pounds, and leave the affair to me."

"But you mistake, Fred, they are as haughty as Lucifer."

"Just leave it to me, sir: I fancy I know something of the world by this time. It may require more money, but the result I will answer for."

Sir Marmaduke's confidence in his son's tact and wordly skill was one of the articles of his faith, and he sat down at the table and wrote the order on the bank at once. "Here Fred," said he; "I only beg of you to remember, that the way to express the grateful sense I entertain of this boy's conduct is not by wounding the susceptibilities of his feelings; and if they be above the class of farmers, which I really cannot ascertain, your steps must demand all your caution."

"I hope, sir," said Fred with some vanity in the tone, "that I

have never made you blush for my awkwardness, and I don't intend to do so now. I promise for the success of my negociation; but I must not say a word more of how I mean to obtain it."

Sir Marmaduke was very far from feeling satisfied with himself for having even so far encouraged a plan, that his own blind confidence in his son's cleverness had for a moment entrapped him into; he would gladly have withdrawn his consent, but old experience taught him that Fred was never completely convinced he was right, until he met opposition to his opinion. So he parted with him for the night, hoping that sleep might suggest a wiser counsel and a clearer head; and that being left free to act, he might possibly feel a doubt as to the correctness of his own judgment.

As for Fred, no sooner was he alone than he began to regret the pledge his precipitancy had carried him into. What were the nature of the advances he was to make—how to open the negociation, in a quarter the habits and prejudices of which he was utterly ignorant of, he had not the most vague conception; and, as he sought his chamber, he had half persuaded himself to the conviction, that the safest, and the most honest course, after all, would be to avow in the morning that he had overstated his diplomatic abilities, and fairly abandon a task, to which he saw himself inadequate. These were his last sleeping thoughts; for his waking resolves, we must enter upon another chapter.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### "A DIPLOMATIST DEFEATED."

If Frederick Travers went to sleep at night with very considerable doubts, as to the practicability of his plans regarding the O'Donoghues, his waking thoughts were very far from re-assuring him, and he heartily wished he had never engaged in the enterprize. Now, however, his honour was in a manner pledged; he had spoken so confidently of success, there was nothing for it but to go forward, and endeavour, as as well he might, to redeem his promise.

At the time we speak of, military men never for a moment divested themselves of the emblems of their career; the uniform and the sword, the plumed hat and the high boot, formed a costume not to be worn at certain periods and laid aside at others, but was their daily dress, varying merely in the degree of full or half dress, as the occasion warranted. There was no affectation of the happy freedom of "Mufti"—no pretended enjoyment of the incognito of a black coat and round hat; on the contrary, the king's livery was borne with a pride which, erring on the opposite side, suggested a degree of assumption and conscious importance in the wearer, which more or less separated the soldier from the civilian in bearing, and gradually originated a feeling of soreness on the part of the more humbly clad citizen towards the more favoured order.

A certain haughty, overbearing tone of manner, was then popular in the army, and particularly in those regiments which boasted of an unalloyed nobility among the officers. If they assumed an air of superiority to the rest of the service, so much the more did they look down upon the mere civilian, whom they considered as belonging to a very subordinate class and order of mankind. To mark the sense of this difference of condition in a hundred little ways, and by a hundred petty observances, was part of a military education, and became a more unerring test of the soldier in society, than even the cockade and the cross-belt. To suppose that such a line of conduct should not have inspired those against whom it was directed with a feeling of counter hatred, would be to disbelieve in human nature. The civilian, indeed,

reciprocated with dislike the soldier's insolence, and, in their estrangement from each other, the breach grew gradually wider—the dominant tyranny of the one, and the base-born vulgarity of the other, being themes each loved to dilate upon without ceasing.

Now, this consciousness of superiority, so far from relieving Frederick Travers of any portion of the difficulty of his task, increased it tenfold. He knew and felt he was stooping to a most unwarrantable piece of condescension in seeking these people at all; and although he trusted firmly that his aristocratic friends were very unlikely to hear of proceedings in a quarter so remote and unvisited, yet how he should answer to his own heart for such a course, was another and a far more puzzling matter. He resolved, then, in the true spirit of his order, to give his conduct all the parade of a most condescending act, to let them see plainly, how immeasurably low he had voluntarily descended to meet them; and to this end he attired himself in his full field uniform, and with as scrupulous a care as though the occasion were a review before his Majesty. His costume of scarlet coat, with blue velvet facings, separating at the breast, so as to show a vest of white kerseymere, trimmed with a gold border—his breeches of the same colour and material, met at the knee by the high and polished boot, needed but the addition of his cocked hat, fringed with an edging of ostrich feathers, to set off a figure of singular elegance and symmetry. The young men of the day were just beginning to dispense with hair powder, and Fred wore his rich brown locks, long and floating, in the new mode—a fashion which well became him, and served to soften down the somewhat haughty carriage of his head. There was an air of freedom, an absence of restraint, in the military costume of the period, which certainly contributed to increase the advantages of a naturally good-looking man, in the same way as the present stiff, Prussian mode of dress, will, assuredly, conceal many defects in mould and form among less-favoured individuals. The loosely-falling flaps of the waistcoat—the deep hanging cuffs of the coat—the easy folds of the long skirt—gave a character of courtliness to uniform which, to our eye, it at present is very far from possessing. In fact, the graceful carriage and courteous demeanour of the drawing-room, suffered no impediment from the pillory of a modern stock, or the rigid inflexibility of a coat strained almost to bursting.

"Are you on duty, Fred?" said Sir Marmaduke, laughing, as his son entered the breakfast-room, thus carefully attired.

"Yes, sir; I am preparing for my mission; and it would ill become an ambassador to deliver his credentials in undress."

"To what court are you then accredited?" said Sybella, laughing.

"His Majesty, The O'Donoghue," interposed his father; "King of Glenflesk, Baron of Inchigeela, Lord Protector of—of half the blackguards in the county, I verily believe," added he, in a more natural key.

"Are you really going to Carrig-na-curra, Fred?" asked Miss Travers, hurriedly; "are you going to visit our neighbours?"

"I'll not venture to say that such is the place, much less pretend to pronounce it after you, my dear sister, but I am about to wait on these worthy people, and, if they will permit me, have a peep at the interior of their stockade or wigwam, whichever it be."

"It must have been a very grand thing in its day: that old castle has some fine features about it yet," replied she calmly.

"Like Windsor, I suppose," said Fred as he replied to her, and then complacently glanced at the well-fitting boot which ornamented his leg. "They'll not be over-ceremonious, I hope, about according me an audience."

"Not in the forenoon, I believe," said Sir Marmaduke drily; for he was recalling the description old Roach had given him of his own reception by Kerry O'Leary, and which circumstance, by-the-by, figured somewhat ostentatiously in his charge to the old baronet.

"Oh, then, they receive early," resumed Fred; "the old French style—the 'petit levée du roi'—before ten o'clock. Another cup of tea, Sybella, and then I must look after a horse.

"I have given orders already on that score. I flatter myself you'll rather approve of my stud; for, amongst the incongruities of Ireland, I have fallen upon an honest horse-dealer."

"Indeed!" said the young man, with more interest than he had yet shown in the conversation; "I must cultivate that fellow, one might exhibit him with great success in London."

"Unquestionably, Fred, he is a curiosity; for while he is a perfect simpleton about the value of an animal; an easy-tempered, good-natured, soft fellow—with respect to knowledge of a horse, his points, his performance, and his soundness, I never saw his equal."

"I'll give him a commission to get me two chargers," said Fred, delighted at the prospect of deriving so much benefit from his Irish journey. "What makes you look so serious, Sybella?"

"Was I so, Fred? I scarcely know—perhaps I was regretting," added she archly, "that there were no ladies at Carrig-na-curra to admire so very smart a cavalier."

Frederick coloured slightly and endeavoured to laugh, but the con-

sciousness that his "bravery" of costume was somewhat out of place, worried him and he made no reply."

"You'll not be long, Fred," said his father, I shall want you to take a walk with me to the lake."

"No, Fred—don't stay long away; it is not above two miles from this at farthest."

"Had I not better send a guide with you?"

"No, no; if the place be larger than a mud hovel, I cannot mistake it. So here comes our steed. Well, I own, he is the best thing I've yet seen in these parts;" and the youth opened the window, and stepped out to approach the animal. He was, indeed, a very creditable specimen of Lanty's taste in horse-flesh—the model of a compact and powerfully-built cob horse.

"A hundred guineas, eh?" said Fred, in a tone of question.

"Sixty—not a pound more," said the old man in conscious pride. "The fellow said but fifty; I added ten on my own account."

Frederick mounted the cob, and rode him across the grass, with that quiet hand and steady seat which bespeaks the judgment of one called upon to be critical. "A little, a very little over-done in the mouthing, but his action perfect," said he, as he returned to the window, and held the animal in an attitude to exhibit his fine symmetry to advantage. "The prince has a passion for a horse of this class; I hope you have not become attached to him?"

"His Royal Highness shall have him at once, Fred, if he will honour you by accepting him." And as he spoke, he laid a stress on the *you*, to evince the pleasure he anticipated in the present being made by Frederick, and not himself.

"Now, then, with God and St. George!" cried Fred, laughingly, as he waved an adieu with his plumed hat, and cantered easily towards the high road.

It was a clear and frosty day in December, with a blue sky above, and all below bright and glittering in a thin atmosphere. The lake, clear as crystal, reflected every cliff and crag upon the mountain—while each island on its surface was defined with a crisp sharpness of outline, scarce less beautiful than in the waving foliage of summer. The many-coloured heaths, too, shone in hues more bright and varied, than usual in our humid climate; and the voices which broke the silence, heard from long distances away, came mellowed and softened in their tones, and harmonized well with the solitary grandeur of the scene. Nor was Frederick Travers insensible to its influence; the height of those bold mountains—their wild and fanciful outlines—the sweeping glens that

wound along their bases—the wayward stream that flowed through the deep valleys, and, as if in sportiveness, serpentined their course, were features of scenery he had not witnessed before; while the perfect solitude awed and appalled him.

He had not ridden long, when the tall towers of the old castle of Carrig-na-curra caught his eye, standing proudly on the bold mass of rock above the road. The unseemly adjunct of farm-house and stables were lost to view at such a distance, or blended with the general mass of building, so that the whole gave the impression of extent and pretension to a degree he was by no means prepared for. These features, however, gradually diminished as he drew nearer; the highly-pitched roof, pierced with narrow windows, patched and broken—the crumbling battlements of the towers themselves—the ruinous dilapidation of the outer buildings, disenchanted the spectator of his first more favourable opinion; until at length, as he surveyed the incongruous and misshapen pile, with its dreary mountain back-ground, he wondered how, at any point of view, he should have deemed it other than the gloomy abode it seemed at that moment.

The only figure Frederick Travers had seen, as he rode along, was that of a man carrying a gun in his hand, in a dress somewhat like a game-keeper's, who, at some short distance from the road, moved actively across the fields, springing lightly from hillock to hillock with the step of a practised mountain walker, and seemingly regardless of the weight of a burden which he carried on one shoulder: so rapidly did he move, that Frederick found it difficult to keep pace with him, as the road was deeply cut up, and far from safe for horse travel. Curious to make out what he carried, Travers spurred eagerly forward; and, at last, but not without an effort, came within hail of him at the iron-barred gate which formed the outer entrance to the castle from the high road. The burden was now easily seen, and at once suggested to Frederick's mind the reason of the bearer's haste. It was a young buck, just killed; the blood still trickled from the wound in its skull.

"Leave that gate open, my good fellow," cried Frederick, in a voice of command, as the other pushed the frail portal wide, and let it fall back heavily to its place again—"Do you hear me?—leave it open."

"We always leap it when mounted," was the cool reply, as the speaker turned his head round, and then, without deigning either another word or look, continued his way up the steep ascent.

Travers felt the rude taunt sorely, and would have given much to be near him who uttered it; but, whether disdaining to follow a counsel thus insolently conveyed, or, it might be, not over-confident of his horse,

he dismounted, and, flinging wide the gate, rode quickly up the causeway—not, however, in time to overtake the other; for, although the way was enclosed by walls on both sides, he had disappeared already, but in what manner, and how, it seemed impossible to say.

"My father has omitted poaching, it would seem, in his catalogue of Irish virtues," muttered the young man, as he rode through the arched keep, and halted at the chief entrance to the house. The door lay open, displaying the cheerful blaze of a pine-wood fire, that burned briskly within the ample chimney, in the keen air of a frosty morning. "I see I shall have my ride for my pains," was Fred's reflection as he passed into the wide hall, and beheld the old weapons and hunting spoils arranged around the walls. "These people affect chieftainship, and go hungry to bed, to dream of fourteen quarterings. Be it so. I shall see the old rookery at all events;" and, so saying, he gave a vigorous pull at the old bell, which answered loudly in its own person, and, also, by a deep howl from the aged fox-hound, then lying at the fire in the drawing-room. These sounds soon died away, and a silence deep and unbroken as before succeeded. A second time, and a third, Travers repeated his summons, but without any difference of result, save that the dog no longer gave tongue;—it seemed as if he were becoming reconciled to the disturbance, as one that needed no farther attention from him.

"I must explore for myself," thought Fred, and so, attaching his horse to the massive ring by which a chain used once to be suspended across the portal, he entered the house. Walking leisurely forward, he gained the long corridor; for a second or two he was uncertain how to proceed, when a gleam of light from the half-open door in the tower led him onward. As he drew near he heard the deep tones of a man's voice recounting, as it seemed, some story of the chase; the last words, at least, were—"I fired but one shot—the herd is wild enough already." Travers pushed wide the door, and entered; as he did so, he involuntarily halted; the evidences of habits and tastes he was not prepared for, suddenly rebuked his unannounced approach, and he would gladly have retreated, were it now practicable.

"Well, sir," said the same voice he heard before, and from a young man, who leaned with one arm on the chimney-piece, and with the other hand held his gun, while he appeared as if he had been conversing with a pale and sickly youth, propped and pillowed in a deep arm-chair. They were the only occupants of the room.

"Well, sir, it would seem you have made a mistake; the inn is lower down the glen—you'll see a sign over the door-way."

The look which accompanied this insolent speech recalled at once to Frederick's mind the same figure he had seen in the glen; and, stung by impertinence from such a quarter, he replied—

"Have no fear, young fellow; you may poach every acre for twenty miles round—I have not tracked you on that score."

"Poach!—tracked me!" reiterated Mark O'Donoghue, for it is needless to say it was he; and then, as if the ludicrous were even stronger in his mind than mere passion, he burst into a rude laugh; while the sick boy's pale face grew a deep crimson, as, with faltering accents, he said—

"You must be a stranger here, sir, I fancy."

"I am so," said Travers mildly and yielding at once to the respect ever due to suffering; "my name is Travers. I have come over here to enquire after a young gentleman who saved my sister's life."

"Then you've *tracked* him well," interposed Mark, with an emphasis on the word. "Here he is."

"Will you not sit down," said Herbert, motioning with his wasted hand to a seat.

Frederick took his place beside the boy at once and said—"We owe you, sir, the deepest debt of gratitude it has ever been our fortune to incur; and if anything could enhance the obligation, it has been the heroism, the personal daring——"

"Hold there," said Mark, sternly. "It's not our custom here to listen to compliments on our courage—we are O'Donoghues."

"This young gentleman's daring was no common one," answered Travers, as if stung by the taunt.

"My brother will scarce feel flattered by your telling him so," was Mark's haughty answer; and for some seconds Frederick knew not how to resume the conversation; at last, turning to Herbert, he said—

"May I hope that, without offending you, we may be permitted in some shape to express the sentiment I speak of; it is a debt which cannot be requited; let us at least have some evidence that we acknowledge it."

"It is the more like some of our own," broke in Mark with a fierce laugh; "we have parchments enough, but we never pay. Your father's agent could tell you that."

Frederick gave no seeming attention to this speech, but went on—"When I say there is nothing in our power we would deem enough, I but express the feelings of my father and myself."

"There, there," cried Mark, preventing Herbert who was about to reply, "you've said far more than was needed for a wet jacket and a

few weeks' low diet. Let us have a word about the poaching you spoke of."

His fixed and steady stare—the rigid brow, by which these words were accompanied, at once proclaimed the intention of one who sought reparation for an insult, and so instantly did they convey the sentiment, that Travers, in a second, forgot all about his mission, and, starting to his feet, replied in a whisper, audible but to Mark—

"True, it was a very hazardous guess; but when, in England, we meet with a fustian jacket and a broken beaver, in company with a gun and a game-bag, we have little risk in pronouncing the owner a game-keeper or a poacher."

Mark struck his gun against the ground with such violence as shivered the stock from the barrel, while he grasped the corner of the chimney-piece convulsively with the other hand. It seemed as if passion had actually paralysed him: as he stood thus, the door opened, and Kate O'Donoghue entered. She was dressed in the becoming half-toilette of the morning, and wore on her head one of those caps of blue velvet, embroidered in silver, which are so popular among the peasantry of Rhenish Germany. The light airiness of her step as she came forward, unconscious of a stranger's presence, displayed her figure in its most graceful character. Suddenly her eyes fell upon Frederick Travers, she stopped and courtesied low to him, while he, thunderstruck with amazement at recognizing his fellow traveller so unexpectedly, could scarcely return her salute with becoming courtesy.

"Mr. Travers," said Herbert, after waiting in vain for Mark to speak; "Mr. Travers has been kind enough to come and enquire after me. Miss O'Donoghue, sir;" and the boy, with much bashfulness, essayed in some sort the ceremony of introduction.

"My cousin, Mr. Mark O'Donoghue," said Kate, with a graceful movement of her hand towards Mark, whose attitude led her to suppose he was not known to Travers.

"I have had the honour of presenting myself already," said Frederick, bowing; but Mark responded not to the inclination, but stood still with bent brow and clenched lip, seemingly unconscious of all around him, while Kate seated herself, and motioned to Travers to resume his place. She felt how necessary it was she should atone, by her manner, for the strange rudeness of her cousin's; and her mind being now relieved of the fear which first struck her, that Frederick's visit might be intended for herself, she launched freely and pleasantly into conversation, recurring to the incidents of the late journey, and the fellow-travellers they had met with.

If Kate was not sorry to learn that "the Lodge" was tenanted by persons of such condition and class, as might make them agreeable neighbours, Travers, on the other hand, was overjoyed at discovering one of such attractions within an easy visiting distance, while Herbert sat by, wondering how persons, so little known to each other, could have so many things to say, and so many topics which seemed mutually interesting. For so it is; they who are ignorant of the world and its habits, can scarcely credit the great extent of those generalities which form food for daily intercourse—nor with what apparent interest people can play the game of life, with but counterfeit coinage. He listened at first with astonishment, and afterwards with delight, to the pleasant flippancy of each, as in turn they discussed scenes, and pleasures, and people, of whom he never so much as heard. The "gentillesse" of French manner—would that we had a name for the thing in English—imparted to Kate's conversation a graceful ease our more reserved habits rarely permit; and while in her costume and her carriage there was a certain coquetry discernible, not a particle of affectation pervaded either her opinions or expressions. Travers, long accustomed to the best society of London, had yet seen scarcely anything of the fascination of foreign agreeability, and yielded himself so insensibly to its charm, that an hour slipped away unconsciously, and he totally forgot the great object of his visit, and lost all recollection of the luckless animal he had attached to the door ring—luckless, indeed, for already a heavy snow-drift was falling, and the day had assumed all the appearance of severe winter.

"You cannot go now, sir," said Herbert, as Frederick rose to take his leave;—"there's a heavy snow-storm without;" for the boy was so interested in all he heard, he could not endure the thought of his departure.

"Oh! it's nothing," said Travers, lightly. "There's an old adage—'Snow should not scare a soldier.'"

"There's another proverb in the French service," said Kate, laughing, as she pointed to the blazing hearth—"'Le soldat ne tourne pas son dos au feu.'"

"I accept the augury," cried Frederick, laughing heartily at the witty misapplication of the phrase, and resumed his seat once more.

"Cousin Kate plays chess," said Herbert, in his anxiety to suggest a plausible pretext for delaying Frederick's departure.

"And I am passionately fond of the game; would you favour me so far?"

"With pleasure," said she smiling; "I only ask one condition, 'point de grace'—no giving back—the O'Donoghues never take or give

quarter—isn't that so, Mark? Oh! he's gone," and now for the first time it was remarked that he had left the apartment.

In a few moments after, they had drawn the little marquetrie table close to the fire, and were deeply interested in the game.

At first, each party played with a seeming attention, which certainly imposed on Herbert, who sat eagerly watching the progress of the game. Frederick Travers was, however, far more occupied in observing his antagonist than in the disposition of his rooks and pawns. While she, soon perceiving his inattention, half suspected that he did not deem her an enemy worth exerting his skill upon, and thus, partly in pique, she bestowed more watchfulness than at first.

"So, Mademoiselle," cried Travers at length, recurring to his game, "I perceive you have only permitted me to advance thus far, to cut off my retreat for ever. How am I to save myself now?"

"It's hard to say, Sir Captain. It's the old tactique of Celts and Saxons on both sides; you would advance into the heart of the enemy's country, and as, unhappily, the men in ivory are truer than the natives were here, and won't take bribes to fight against their fellows, you must e'en stand or fall by your own deservings."

"Come, then, the bold policy for ever. Check."

"And you lose your castle."

"And you your bishop!"

"We must avenge the church, sir. Take care of your queen."

"'Parbleu,' Mademoiselle, you are a fierce foe. What say you, if we draw the battle?"

"No, no, cousin Kate; continue, and you win it."

"Be it so. And now for my turn," said Travers, who was really a first-rate player, and at length began to feel interested in the result.

The move he made exhibited so much of skill, that Kate foresaw that the fortune of the day was about to change. She leaned her brow upon her hand, and deliberated long on the move; and at length, lifting her head, she said—

"I should like much to beat you—but in fair fight, remember—no courtesy nor favour."

"I can spare neither," said Travers, smiling.

"Then, defeat is no dishonour. There's my move."

"And mine," cried Fred, as rapidly.

"What prevents my taking you? I see nothing."

"Nor I either," said he, half chagrined, for his move was an oversight.

"You are too proud to ask quarter—of course, you are—or I should say, take it back."

"No, Kate, no," whispered Herbert, whose excitement was at the highest.

"I must abide my fortune," said Frederick, bowing; "and the more calmly, as I have won the game."

"Won the game! How?—where?"

"Check!"

"How tauntingly he says it now," said Kate, while her eyes sparkled brilliantly. "There is too much of the conqueror in all that."

Frederick's glance met hers at the instant, and her cheek coloured deeply.

Who knows the source of such emotions, or of how much pleasure and pain they are made up! "And yet, I have not won," said he, in a low voice.

"Then, be it a drawn battle," said Kate. "You can afford to be generous, and I can't bear being beaten—that's the truth of it."

"If I could but win!" muttered Travers, as he rose from the table; and whether she overheard the words, and that they conveyed more than a mere allusion to the game, she turned hastily away, and approached the window.

"Is that snow-ball your horse, Captain Travers?" said she, with a wicked smile.

"My father's favourite cob, by Jove!" exclaimed Frederick; and, as if suddenly aroused to the memory of his lengthy visit, made his 'adieus' with more confusion than was exactly suitable to a fashionable Guardsman—and departed.

"I like him," said Herbert, as he looked out of the window after him. "Don't you, cousin Kate?"

But cousin Kate did not reply.

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